

BOHO BEST FESTIVAL EVER: HOW TO MANAGE A DISASTER



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270 PARTICIPANTS
17 SHOWS
9 VENUES
2 CITIES

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In 2014 Boho presented the first production of *Best Festival Ever: How To Manage A Disaster in the UK and Sweden.*

The culmination of 3.5 years of research and development between the UK and Australia, Best Festival Ever is an absolutely unique blend of science, theatre and gaming.



WHAT IS BEST FESTIVAL EVER?

Best Festival Ever: How To Manage A Disaster is an interactive performance for an audience seated around a table.

Using hands-on boardgame mechanisms, the audience plan and manage their own music festival.

Working together, the audience take control of the festival from start to finish all the way from programming the bands to producing the final concert.

Developed in collaboration with research scientists, the show explores concepts from Systems Science and Climate Modelling.

Created as a portable work for a variety of audiences, the show has been presented in theatres, conferences, festivals, museums, classrooms, offices and boardrooms.

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**“AN ABSOLUTELY
BRILLIANT IDEA,
REALLY WELL
DELIVERED AND
GREAT FUN.
LOVED IT!”**

WHY SYSTEMS SCIENCE?

“The show gave real insights into what usually might be considered difficult and hard topics such as systems thinking and resilience.”

“This could be used in so many ways to help people understand the complexity of sustainability and ecological thinking.”



WHAT IS A SYSTEM?

Systems are made up of many different components that form one integrated whole. We are all part of systems: of families, of friends, the economic system political systems, ecological systems, social systems like religions or sports clubs, and many others.

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WHAT IS SYSTEMS SCIENCE?

Systems Science looks at the connections between a system's components. Systems scientists focus on the behaviour of the whole, rather than of individual parts.

Systems Thinking offers a valuable toolkit of concepts and ideas for us when thinking about our own lives and the systems that we are a part of and how we should negotiate them.

INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMS CONCEPTS

Best Festival Ever is designed to prompt audiences to think about the systems we are part of, and how we might manage them better.

The show introduces audiences to key ideas from Systems Science including:

- » Modelling
- » Interconnectivity
- » Feedback loops
- » Tragedy of the Commons
- » Resilience
- » Tipping points

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

The *Best Festival Ever* audience are active participants, taking on the management of the fictional music festival at the heart of the show.

Seated around a table, up to 30 audience members make decisions and direct the course of the festival, through a range of hands-on boardgame mechanisms.

At times individually, in groups or all together, audiences are responsible for choosing the lineup of bands, constructing the festival site, managing the festival's amenities, electricity and transport systems, and dealing with the concerts.

For example, in one game the audience is responsible for programming bands while

keeping the festival's 'budget' balanced and trying to curate a successful lineup without taking on too many sponsors.

The show mixes a science-lecture format with games and the unfolding story of the fictional 'best festival ever', seen through the eyes of three characters: a stage manager, a local musician and a first time festival-goer.

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OUR AUDIENCE

“I both enjoyed and learned from this joyful refreshment on systems theory, and the simulation game stretching participants creativity and team spirit.”

“An immersive story, a good balance of content and fun.”

“The interactivity made it so much fun I didn’t realise how much I was learning.”

“Really well done. This session was the best introduction to systems we’ve had!”

AUDIENCE NUMBERS

As an interactive work, taking place around a table, *Best Festival Ever* has a limited capacity of between 12-30 per show.

Most audiences had between 15 and 20 people. To test the work’s flexibility we presented it to groups as small as 10 and as large as 32.

Over 17 shows in London and Stockholm, *Best Festival Ever* was attended by 270 people.

TYPES OF AUDIENCE

Best Festival Ever was designed as an adaptable work that can take place in many different venues for different kinds of audiences. A key goal for the 2014 tour was to test how well the show works in a diverse range of settings and with each of the key audience groups we hope to engage.

We presented *Best Festival Ever* to:

- » Theatre audiences
- » Museum audiences
- » Corporate groups
- » High school students (15-17 years old)
- » University post-graduate students
- » Research scientists
- » Policy-makers and urban planners
- » Festival managers
- » Social workers and community artists

REVIEWS AND MEDIA COVERAGE

COVERAGE

Media coverage highlights for Best Festival Ever include:

- » Article in Timeout London
- » A special Best Festival Ever London Science Museum newsletter
- » Guest post on London Science Museum blog
- » Guest post on Coney blog
- » Featured guests at Central Saint Martins University's London LASER art+science event

REVIEW: PI MEDIA ONLINE

On Tuesday evening at the Dana Centre, 25 people locked horns and chuckled in equal measure at the trials and tribulations of planning and executing a three-day music festival in Boho's Best Festival Ever.

Using an interactive table board incorporating a series of games, Best Festival Ever looks at the social, economic, environmental and political issues associated with festivals. We learned the rudiments of how to manage and book artists (the sad, the bad and the beautiful), debated the moral ethics of sponsorships and controlled the amount of waste that permeated the countryside.

It is safe to say that the interactive festival site had a lot going on. Festival organisers tried to control the steady roll call of artists, crowds, engineers and natural

elements. One stage manager was left literally hanging off a stage beam when the area 'flooded' with burst riverbanks. Trucks weaved in and out picking up bollards and bins across the circuit. Polite, reserved couples soon lost their inhibitions, passionately defending their zebra crossings and portable loos, concerned about how many cows they could cram onto the back of their trucks that had to take designated routes between team hands moving them to safety.

A witty script kept the audience amused, with individual audience members assigned as locals/VIPs including a Pythonesque farmer and Damon Albarn from the Gorillaz.

It was a funny and engaging night, suitable for school kids through to post-graduates. I would highly recommend it to anyone.

Lynsey Ford, 17 November 2014
pimediaonline.co.uk

PROJECT HISTORY

2006 - 11 Australian science-theatre collective Boho produced four full-length interactive performances exploring Game Theory, Network Theory and Complex Systems Science.

2011 Boho artist David Finnigan undertook a 5-month research residency at University College London's Environment Institute, producing a report on the interface between climate / systems modelling and interactive performance.

2012 As University College London company-in-residence, Boho developed a prototype of new interactive performance work *Best Festival Ever*.

2013 *Best Festival Ever* was further developed through a residency at Arts House in Melbourne.

2014 Boho returned to London for a 3-month residency at the London Science Museum, developing the final version of *Best Festival Ever* before presenting performance seasons in London and Stockholm.

2015 *Best Festival Ever* will tour to venues in Canberra and Singapore later this year, and the company will begin development on new tabletop systems-based performances.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Over November - December 2014 we presented *Best Festival Ever* at nine venues throughout London and Stockholm.

We shared the work with theatre audiences, research scientists, post-graduates, high school students, corporate groups, urban planners and festival producers.

London



LONDON SCIENCE MUSEUM

At the conclusion of our three month residency we presented four shows for the general public at the Museum's Dana Centre. Each show was accompanied by a short lecture by a systems scientist talking about their own work in relation to the performance.

Zone Creative Agency

A team-building and corporate training exercise for staff of digital design firm Zone.

"I invited the Boho team into Zone to run Best Festival Ever with our Creative team. It was the ideal mix of a learning experience and team-building - absolutely unique in its approach, and a brilliant alternative to standard corporate away day sessions." Julie Dodd, Zone Creative

Kings College London

A show in the Kings College Dissecting Room Theatre for Kings theatre students and staff of the London Science Gallery.

FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

Best Festival Ever was the final module in Forum's week-long Systems Thinking course for Masters students studying Sustainable Development.

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE

We presented a short scratch season at this iconic experimental performance venue in South London as part of their Autumn Scratch season.



Stockholm



MILJÖVERKSTAN

Best Festival Ever was part of the planning process for festival producers creating a community arts festival at the Miljöverkstan art space in Stockholm.



FÄRGFABRIKEN

A show for Swedish urban planners, architects and policy-makers introducing them to systems science concepts in the lead up to the 2015 Future Stockholm exhibition.



Stockholm Resilience Centre

We presented the show to research scientists in the world's leading Systems Science institution, to help them explore new ways of communicating systems concepts to the general public.



PARTNERSHIPS

Boho's *Best Festival Ever* was created in collaboration with partners including:

CREATIVE PARTNERS

For *Best Festival Ever*, Boho was joined by members of Sydney performance collective Applespiel and supported by UK theatre company Coney.

SCIENCE PARTNERS

In researching this work, Boho worked closely with scientists from University College London's Environment Institute, as well as drawing on work produced by CSIRO's Complex Systems Science Team and research from the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

HOST ORGANISATIONS

Best Festival Ever was developed through a series of residencies and the extensive support of host organisations University College London, the London Science Museum and Arts House Melbourne is gratefully acknowledged.

FUNDING PARTNERS

Boho received financial support for this work through the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts NSW, the NED Foundation, Arts House Melbourne, University College London and the London Science Museum.

PRESENTING PARTNERS

The 2014 London / Stockholm touring season of *Best Festival Ever* took place with the support of venues including the Battersea Arts Centre, Kings College London, the London Science Museum, Central Saint Martins College, Forum for the Future, Zone Creative Agency, the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Färgfabriken and Miljöverkstan.

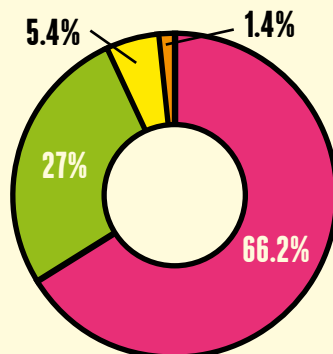
AUDIENCE STATISTICS

Process

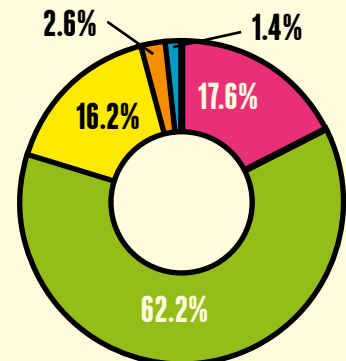
Working with the London Science Museum's audience research team, we produced an audience survey that was completed by 109 attendees - more than a third of our 270 participants.

- STRONGLY AGREE
- AGREE
- NEITHER
- DISAGREE
- STRONGLY DISAGREE

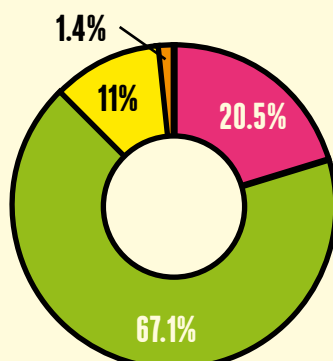
I found the show fun and engaging



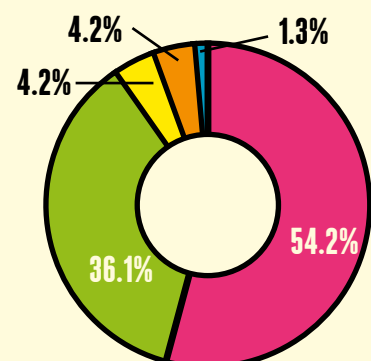
The show contained ideas that are useful to me in everyday life



I now have a better understanding of what a complex system is



I am likely to recommend the show to other people



THE ARTISTS

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Nikki Kennedy, Rachel Roberts,
David Finnigan, Nathan
Harrison and David Shaw.



BOHO

Australian science-theatre company Boho creates interactive performance in collaboration with research scientists. Boho's work explores concepts from sciences including Game Theory, Network Theory and Complex Systems Science.

For *Best Festival Ever*, Boho is represented by David Finnigan and David Shaw.

For this project, Boho was joined by three members of Sydney performance collective Applespiel: Nathan Harrison, Nikki Kennedy and Rachel Roberts.

Best Festival Ever was designed and built by UK designer Gary Campbell.

Tassos Stevens, co-director of theatre company Coney, contributed to the project as dramaturg / outside eye.

University College London complexity scientist and urban planner Dr Yvonne Rydin was key science consultant throughout the project's development.

FUTURE PLANS



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TOURS AND SHOWS

At the conclusion of the 2014 production, *Best Festival Ever* is ready for immediate tours and one-off presentations for theatres, conferences, festivals, offices and classrooms.

The work is highly portable and can be presented for a minimal cost in a range of settings.

NEW TABLETOP SYSTEMS WORKS

Best Festival Ever is the first of a series of new tabletop works exploring different complex systems.

In *Best Festival Ever*, the system being examined was a fictional music festival.

In the next iteration of the project, Boho is seeking to work with organisations to develop bespoke tabletop games based on systems of their choice, whether modelling a business, a city street, disaster relief or a social network, Boho will work with the organisation to research and model the system, then turn it into a playable game experience.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Devised by

David Finnigan
Nathan Harrison
Nikki Kennedy
Rachel Roberts
David Shaw

Designer

Gary Campbell

Dramaturge

Tassos Stevens

Consultant

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THANKS TO

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